

## JOINT OWNERS IN SPAIN.

THE Old Ladies' Home, much to the sorrow of its inmates, "set back from the road." A long, box-bordered walk led from the great door down to the old turnpike, and thickly bowing lilac bushes forced the eye to play an unsatisfied hide-and-seek with the view. The sequestered old ladies were quite unreconciled to their leaf-hung outlook; active life was presumably over for them, and all the more did they long to "see the passing" of the little world which had usurped their places. The house itself was very old, a stately, square structure, with pillars on either side of the door, and a fanlight above. It had been unpainted now for many years, and had softened into a mellow lichen-gray, so harmonious and pleasing in the midst of summer's vital green that the few artists who ever heard of Tiverton sought it out, to plant umbrella and easel in the garden, and sketch the stately relic; photographers also made it one of their accustomed haunts. Of the artists the old ladies disapproved, without dissenting voice. It seemed a "shaller" proceeding to sit out there in the hot sun for no result save a wash of unreal colors on a white ground, or a few hasty lines indicating no solid reality; but the photographers were their constant delight, and they rejoiced in forming themselves

into groups upon the green, to be "took" and carried away with the house.

One royal winter's day there was a directors' meeting in the great south room, the matron's parlor, a spot bearing the happy charm of perfect loyalty to the past, with its great fireplace, iron dogs and crane, its settle and entrancing corner cupboards. The hard-working president of the board was speaking hastily and from a full heart, conscious that another instant's discussion might bring the tears to her eyes:—

"May I be allowed to say — it's irrelevant, I know, but I should like the satisfaction of saying it — that this is enough to make one vow never to have anything to do with an institution of any sort, from this time forth for evermore!"

For the moment had apparently come when a chronic annoyance must be recognized as unendurable. They had borne with the trial, inmates and directors, quite as cheerfully as most ordinary people accept the inevitable; but suddenly the tension had become too great, and the universal patience snapped. Two of the old ladies, Mrs. Blair and Miss Dyer, who were settled in the Home for life, and who, before going there, had shown no special waywardness of temper, had proved utterly incapable of living in peace with any available human

being; and as the Home had insufficient accommodations, neither could be isolated to fight her "black butterflies" alone. No inmate, though she were cousin to Hercules, could be given a room to herself; and the effect of this dual system on these two, possibly the most eccentric of the number, had proved disastrous in the extreme. Each had, in her own favorite fashion, "kicked over the traces," as the matron's son said in town meeting (much to the joy of the village fathers), and to such purpose that, to continue the light-minded simile, very little harness was left to guide them withal. Mrs. Blair, being "high-sperited," like all the Coxes from whom she sprang, had now so tyrannized over the last of her series of room-mates, so brow-beaten and intimidated her, that the latter had actually taken to her bed with a slow fever of discouragement, announcing that "she 'd rather go to the poor-farm and done with it than resk her life there another night; and she 'd like to know what had become of that hundred dollars her nephew Thomas paid down in bills to get her into the Home, for she 'd be thankful to them that laid it away so antic to hand it back before another night went over her head, so 't she could board somewheres decent till 't was gone, and then starve if she 'd got to!"

If Miss Sarah Ann Dyer, known also as a disturber of the public peace, presented a less aggressive front to her kind, she was yet, in her own way, a cross and a hindrance to their spiritual growth. She, poor woman, lived in a scarcely varying state of hurt feeling; her tiny world seemed to her one close federation, existing for the sole purpose of infringing on her personal rights; and though she would not take the initiative in battle, she lifted up her voice in aggrieved lamentation over the tragic incidents, decreed for her alone. She had perhaps never directly reproached her own unhappy room-mate for selecting a

comfortable chair, for wearing squeaking shoes, or singing "Hearken, ye sprightly," somewhat early in the morning, but she chanted those ills through all her waking hours in a high yet husky tone broken by frequent sobs. And therefore, as a result of these domestic whirlwinds and too stagnant pools, came the directors' meeting, and the helpless protest of the exasperated president. The two cases were discussed for an hour longer, in the dreary fashion pertaining to a question which has long been supposed to have but one side; and then it remained for Mrs. Mitchell, the new director, to cut the knot with the energy of one to whom a difficulty is fresh.

"Has it ever occurred to you to put them together?" asked she. "They are impossible people; so, naturally, you have selected the very mildest and most Christian women to endure their nagging. They can't live with the saints of the earth. Experience has proved that. Put them into one room, and let them fight it out together."

The motion was passed with something of that awe ever attending a Napoleonic decree, and passed, too, with the utmost good breeding; for nobody mentioned the Kilkenny cats. The matron compressed her lips and lifted her brows, but said nothing; having exhausted her own resources, she was the more willing to take the superior attitude of good-natured skepticism.

The moving was speedily accomplished, and at ten o'clock, one morning, Mrs. Blair was ushered into the room where her forced colleague sat by the window knitting. There the two were left alone. Miss Dyer looked up, and then heaved a tempestuous sigh over her work, in the manner of one not entirely surprised by its advent, but willing to suppress it if such alleviation might be. She was a thin, colorless woman, and infinitely passive, save at those times when her nervous system conflicted with the scheme of the universe. Not so Mrs. Blair.

She had black eyes, "like live coals," said her awed associates, and her skin was soft and white, albeit wrinkled. One could even believe she had reigned a beauty, as the tradition of the house declared. This morning she held her head higher than ever, and disdained expression except that of an occasional nasal snort. She regarded the room with the air of an impartial though exacting critic: two little beds covered with rising-sun quilts, two little pine bureaus, two washstands. The sunshine lay upon the floor, and in that radiant pathway Miss Dyer sat.

"If I 'd ha' thought I should ha' come to this," began Mrs. Blair, in the voice of one who speaks perforce after long sufferance, "I 'd ha' died in my tracks afore I 'd left my comfortable home down in Tiverton Holler. Story-'n'-a-half house, a good sullar, an' woods nigh by full of sarsaparilla an' gold thread! I've moved more times in this God-forsaken place than a Methodist preacher, fust one room an' then another; an' bad is the best. It was poor pickin's enough afore, but this is the crowner!"

Miss Dyer said nothing, but two large tears rolled down and dropped on her work. Mrs. Blair followed their course with gleaming eyes endowed with such uncomfortable activity that they seemed to pounce with every glance.

"What under the sun be you carryin' on like that for?" she asked at last, giving the handle of the water pitcher an emphatic twitch to make it even with the world. "You ain't lost nobody, have ye, sence I moved in here?"

Miss Dyer put aside her knitting with ostentatious abnegation, and began rocking herself back and forth in her chair, which seemed not of itself to sway fast enough, and Mrs. Blair's voice rose again, ever higher and more metallic: —

"I dunno what you've got to complain of more 'n the rest of us. Look at that dress you've got on, — a good thick thibet, an' mine's a cheap, sleazy

alpaca they palmed off on me because they knew my eyesight ain't what it was once. An' you're settin' right there in the sun, gettin' het through, an' it's cold as a barn over here by the door. My land! if it don't make me mad to see anybody without no more sperit than a wet rag! If you've lost anybody, why don't ye say so? An' if it's a mad fit, speak out an' say that! Give me anybody that's got a tongue in their head, I say!"

But Miss Dyer, with an unnecessary display of effort, was hitching her chair into the darkest corner of the room, the rockers hopelessly snarling her yarn at every move.

"I'm sure I would n't keep the sun off'n anybody," she said tearfully. "It never come into my head to take it up, an' I don't claim no share of anything. I guess, if the truth was known, 't would be seen I 'd been used to a house lookin' south, an' the fore-room winders all of a glare o' light, day in an' day out, an' Madeira vines climbin' over 'em, an' a trellis by the front door; but that's all past and gone, past and gone! I never was one to take more 'n belonged to me; an' I don't care who says it, I never shall be. An' I 'd hold to that, if 't was the last word I had to speak!"

This negative sort of retort had an enfeebling effect upon Mrs. Blair.

"My land!" she exclaimed helplessly. "Talk about my tongue! Vinegar's nothin' to cold molasses, if you've got to plough through it."

The other sighed, and leaned her head upon her hand in an attitude of extreme dejection. Mrs. Blair eyed her with the exasperation of one whose just challenge has been refused; she marched back and forth through the room, now smoothing a fold of the counterpane with vicious care, and again pulling the braided rug to one side or the other, the while she sought new fuel for her rage. Without, the sun was lighting snowy knoll and hollow, and printing the fine-etched

tracery of the trees against a crystal sky. The road was not usually much frequented in winter time, but just now it had been worn by the week's sledding into a shining track, and several sleighs went jingling up and down. Tiverton was seizing the opportunity of a perfect day and the best of "going," and was taking its way to market. The trivial happenings of this far-away world had thus far elicited no more than a passing glance from Mrs. Blair; she was too absorbed in domestic warfare even to peer down through the leafless lilac boughs, in futile wonderment as to whose bells they might be, ringing merrily past. On one journey about the room, however, some chance arrested her gaze. She stopped, transfixed.

"Forever!" she cried. Her nervous, blue-veined hands clutched at her apron and held it; she was motionless for a moment. Yet the picture without would have been quite devoid of interest to the casual eye; it could have borne little significance save to one who knew the inner life history of the Tiverton Home, and thus might guess what slight events made up its joy and pain. A young man had set up his camera at the end of the walk, and thrown the cloth over his head preparatory to taking the usual view of the house. Mrs. Blair recovered from her temporary inaction. She rushed to the window and threw up the sash. Her husky voice broke strenuously upon the stillness:—

"Here! you keep right where you be! I'm goin' to be took! You wait till I come!"

She pulled down the window, and went in haste to the closet, in the excess of her eagerness stumbling recklessly forward into its depths.

"Where's my bandbox?" Her voice came piercingly from her temporary seclusion. "Where'd they put it? It ain't here in sight! My soul! where's my bunnet?"

These were apostrophes thrown off  
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in extremity of feeling; they were not questions, and no listener, even with the most friendly disposition in the world, need have assumed the necessity of answering. So, wrapped in oblivion to all earthly considerations save that of her own inward gloom, the one person who might have responded merely swayed back and forth in martyred silence. But no such spiritual withdrawal could insure her safety. Mrs. Blair emerged from the closet, and darted across the room with the energy of one stung by a new despair. She seemed about to fall upon the neutral figure in the corner, but seized the chair-back instead, and shook it with such angry vigor that Miss Dyer cowered down in no simulated fright.

"Where's my green bandbox?" The words were emphasized by cumulative shakes. "Anybody that's took that away from me ought to be biled in ile! Hangin' 's too good for 'em, but let me get my eye on 'em an' they shall swing for 't! Yes, they shall, higher 'n Gilroy's kite!"

The victim put both trembling hands to her ears.

"I ain't deaf!" she wailed.

"Deef? I don't care whether you're deaf or dumb, or whether you're nummer 'n a bectle! It's my bandbox I'm arter. Isr'el in Egypt! you might grind some folks in a mortar an' you could n't make 'em speak!"

It was of no use. Intimidation was worse than hopeless; even bodily force would not avail. She cast one lurid glance at the supine figure, and gave up the quest in that direction as sheer waste of time. With new determination, she again essayed the closet, tossing shoes and rubbers behind her in an unsightly heap, quite heedless of the confusion of rights and lefts. At last, in a dark corner, behind a blue chest, she came upon her treasure. Too hurried now for reproaches, she drew it forth, and with trembling fingers untied the strings. Casting aside the cover, she

produced a huge scoop bonnet of a long-past date, and setting it on her head with the same fevered haste, tied over it the long figured veil which made an inseparable part of her state array. She snatched her stella shawl from the drawer, threw it over her shoulders, and ran out of the room.

Miss Dyer was left quite bewildered by these erratic proceedings, but she had no mind to question them; so many stories were rife in the Home of the eccentricities embodied in the charitable phrase "Mis' Blair's way" that she would scarcely have been amazed had her terrible room-mate chosen to drive a coach and four up the chimney, or saddle the broom for a midnight revel. She drew a long breath of relief at the bliss of solitude, closed her eyes, and strove to regain the lost peace which, as she vaguely remembered, had belonged to her once in a shadowy past.

Silence had come, but not to reign. Back flew Mrs. Blair like a whirlwind. Her cheeks wore each a little hectic spot; her eyes were flaming. The figured veil, swept rudely to one side, was borne backwards on the wind of her coming, and her thin hair, even in those few seconds, had become wildly disarranged.

"He 's gone!" she announced passionately. "He kep' right on while I was findin' my bunnit. He come to take the house, an' he 'd ha' took me an' been glad. An' when I got open that plaguy front door he was jest drivin' away; an' I might ha' hollered till I was black in the face, an' then I could n't ha' made him hear."

"I dunno what to say, nor what not to," remarked Miss Dyer to her corner. "If I speak, I'm to blame; an' so I be if I keep still."

The other old lady had thrown herself into a chair, and was looking wrathfully before her.

"It's the same man that come from Sudleigh last August," she said bitterly.

"He took the house then, an' said he wanted to again when the leaves were off; an' that time I was laid up with my stiff ankle, an' did n't git into it, an' to-day my bunnit was hid, an' I lost it again."

Her voice changed. 'To the listener it took on an awful meaning.

"An' I should like to know whose fault it was. If them that owas the winder, an' set by it till they see him comin', had spoke up an' said, 'Mis' Blair, there's the photograph man. Don't you want to be took?' it would n't ha' been too late! If anybody had answered a civil question, an' said, 'Your bunnit box sets there behind my blue chist,' it would n't ha' been too late then! An' I ain't had my likeness took sence I was twenty year old, an' went to Sudleigh Fair in my changeable *visite* an' leghorn hat, an' Jonathan wore the brocaded weskit he stood up in the next week Thursday. It's enough to make a minister swear!"

Miss Dyer rocked back and forth.

"Dear me!" she wailed. "Dear me suz!"

The dinner bell rang, creating a blessed diversion. Mrs. Blair, rendered absent-minded by her grief, went to the table still in her bonnet and veil; and this dramatic entrance gave rise to such morbid though unexpressed curiosity that every one forbore for a time to wonder why Miss Dyer did not appear. Later, however, when a tray was prepared and sent up to her (according to the programme of her bad days), the general commotion reached an almost unruly point, stimulated as it was by the matron's son, who found an opportunity to whisper to one garrulous old lady that Miss Dyer had received bodily injury at the hands of her room-mate, and that Mrs. Blair had put on her bonnet to be ready for the sheriff when he should arrive. This report, judiciously started, ran like prairie fire; and the house was all the afternoon in a plea-

sant state of excitement. Possibly the matron will never know why so many of the old ladies promenaded the corridors from dinner time until long after early candlelight, while a few kept faithful yet agitated watch from the windows. For interest was divided: some preferred to see the sheriff's advent, and others found zest in the possibility of counting the groans of the prostrate victim.

When Mrs. Blair returned to the stage of action, she was much refreshed by her abundant meal and the strong tea which three times daily heartened her for battle. She laid aside her bonnet and carefully folded the veil. Then she looked about her, and, persistently ignoring all the empty chairs, fixed an annihilating gaze on one where the dinner tray still remained.

"I s'pose there 's no need of my settin' down," she remarked bitinglly. "It 's all in the day's work. Some folks are waited on; some ain't. Some have their victuals brought to 'em an' set under their noses, an' some has to go to the table; when they 're there, they can take it or leave it. The quality can keep their waiters settin' round day in an' day out, fillin' up every chair in the room. For my part, I should think they'd have an extension table moved in, an' a snowdrop cloth over it!"

Miss Dyer had become comparatively placid, but now she gave way to tears.

"Anybody can move that waiter that 's a mind to," she said tremulously. "I would myself, if I had the stren'th; but I ain't got it. I ain't a well woman, an' I ain't been this twenty year. If old Dr. Parks was alive this day, he'd say so. 'You ain't never had a chance,' he says to me. 'You've been pull-hauled one way or another sence you was born.' An' he never knew the wust on 't, for the wust had n't come."

"Humph!" It was a royal and explosive note. It represented scorn for which Mrs. Blair could find no adequate utterance. She selected the straightest

chair in the room, ostentatiously turned its back to her enemy, and seated herself. Then, taking out her knitting, she strove to keep silence; but that was too heavy a task, and at last she broke forth with renewed bitterness: "To think of all the wood I've burnt up in my kitchen stove an' air-tight, an' never thought nothin' of it! To think of all the wood there is now, growin' and rottin' from Dan to Beersheba, an' I can't lay my fingers on it!"

"I dunno what you want o' wood. I'm sure this room 's warm enough."

"You don't? Well, I'll tell you. I want some two-inch boards, to nail up a partition in the middle of this room, same as Josh Marden done to spite his wife. I don't want more 'n my own, but I want it mine."

Miss Dyer groaned, and drew an uncertain hand across her forehead.

"You would n't have no great of an outlay for boards," she said drearily. "'T would n't have to be knee-high to keep me out. I'm no hand to go where I ain't wanted; an' if I ever was, I guess I'm cured on 't now."

Mrs. Blair dropped her knitting in her lap. For an instant she sat there motionless in a growing rigidity; but light was dawning in her eyes. Suddenly she came to her feet, and tossed her knitting on the bed.

"Where's that piece o' chalk you had when you marked out your tumbler quilt?" she called. The words rang like a martial order.

Miss Dyer drew it forth from the ancient-looking bag, known as a cavo, which was ever at her side.

"Here 't is," she said, in her forlornest quaver. "I hope you won't do nothin' out o' the way with it. I should hate to get into trouble here. I ain't that kind."

Mrs. Blair was too excited to hear or heed her. She was briefly, flashingly, taking in the possibilities of the room, her bright black eyes darting here and

there with fiery insistence. Suddenly she went to the closet, and diving to the bottom of a baggy pocket there, drew forth a ball of twine. She chalked it, still in delighted haste, and forced one end upon her bewildered room-mate.

"You go out there to the middle square o' the front winder," she commanded, "an' hold your end o' the string down on the floor. I'll snap it."

Miss Dyer cast one despairing glance about her, and obeyed.

"Crazy!" she muttered. "Oh my land! she's crazy's a loon. I wisht Mis' Mitchell would come in!"

But Mrs. Blair was following out her purpose in a manner exceedingly methodical. Drawing out one bed, so that it stood directly opposite her kneeling helper, she passed the cord about the leg of the bedstead and made it fast; then, returning to the middle of the room, she snapped the line triumphantly. A faint chalk mark was left upon the floor.

"There!" she cried. "Leggo! Now you give me the chalk, an' I'll go over it an' make it whiter."

She knelt and chalked with the utmost absorption, crawling along on her knees quite heedless of the despised alpaca; and Miss Dyer, hovering in a corner, timorously watched her. Mrs. Blair staggered to her feet, entangled by her skirt as she rose.

"There!" she announced. "Now here's two rooms. The chalk mark's the partition. You can have the mornin' sun, for I'd jest as soon live by a taller candle if I can have somethin' that's my own. I'll chalk a lane into the closet, an' we'll both keep a right o' way there. Now I'm to home, and so be you. Don't you dast to speak a word to me unless you come and knock here on my headboard, — that's the front door, — an' I won't to you. Well, if I ain't glad to be alone! I've hung my harp on a willer long enough!"

It was some time before the true

meaning of the new arrangement penetrated Miss Dyer's slower intelligence; but presently she drew her chair nearer the window and thought a little, chuckling as she did so. She too was alone. The sensation was new and very pleasant. Mrs. Blair went back and forth through the closet-lane, putting her clothes away, with high good humor. Once or twice she sang a little — Derby's Ram and Lord Lovell — in a cracked voice. She was in love with solitude.

Just before tea, Mrs. Mitchell, in some trepidation, knocked at the door, to see the fruits of contention present and to come. She had expected to hear loud words, and the silence almost terrified her. Miss Dyer gave one appealing look at Mrs. Blair, and then, with some indecision, went to open the door, for the latch was in her house.

"Well, here you are, comfortably settled!" began Mrs. Mitchell. She had the unmistakable tone of professional kindness; yet it rang clear and true. "May I come in?"

"Set right down here," answered Miss Dyer, drawing forward a chair. "I'm real pleased to see ye."

"And how are you this morning?" This was addressed to the occupant of the other house, who, quite oblivious to any alien presence, stood busily rubbing the chalk marks from her dress.

Mrs. Blair made no answer. She might have been stone deaf, and as dumb as the hearthstone bricks. Mrs. Mitchell cast an alarmed glance at her entertainer.

"Is n't she well?" she said softly.

"It's a real pretty day, ain't it?" responded Miss Dyer. "If 't was summer time, I should think there'd be a sea turn afore night. I like a sea turn myself. It smells jest like Old Boar's Head."

"I have brought you down some fruit." Mrs. Mitchell was still anxiously observing the silent figure, now absorbed in an apparently futile search in

a brocaded workbag. "Mrs. Blair, do you ever cut up oranges and bananas together?"

No answer. The visitor rose, and unwittingly stepped across the dividing line.

"Mrs. Blair" — she began, but she got no further.

Her hostess turned upon her in surprised welcome.

"Well, if it ain't Mis' Mitchell! I can't say I did n't expect you, for I see you goin' into Miss Dyer's house not more'n two minutes ago. Seems to me you make short calls. Now set right down here, where you can see out o' the winder. That square's cracked, but I guess the directors'll put in another."

Mrs. Mitchell was amazed, but entirely interested. It was many a long day since any person, official or private, had met with cordiality from this quarter.

"I hope you and our friend are going to enjoy your room together," she essayed, with a hollow cheerfulness.

"I expect to be as gay as a cricket," returned Mrs. Blair innocently. "An' I do trust I've got good neighbors. I like to keep to myself, but if I've got a neighbor, I want her to be somebody you can depend upon."

"I'm sure Miss Dyer means to be very neighborly." The director turned, with a smile, to include that lady in the conversation. But the local deafness had engulfed her. She was sitting peacefully by the window, with the air of one retired within herself, to think her own very remote thoughts. The visitor mentally improvised a little theory, and it seemed to fit the occasion. They had quarreled, she thought, and each was disturbed at any notice bestowed on the other.

"I have been wondering whether you would both like to go sleighing with me some afternoon?" she ventured, with the humility which usually assails humankind in a frank and shrewish pre-

sence. "The roads are in wonderful condition, and I don't believe you'd take cold. Do you know, I found Grandmother Eaton's foot-warmers the other day! I'll bring them along."

"Law! I'd go anywhere to get out o' here," said Mrs. Blair ruthlessly. "I don't know when I've set behind a horse, either. I guess the last time was the day I rid up here for good, an' then I did n't feel much like lookin' at outdoor. Well, I guess you *be* a new director, or you'd never ha' thought on 't!"

"How do you feel about it, Miss Dyer?" asked the visitor. "Will you go, — perhaps on Wednesday?"

The other householder moved uneasily. Her hands twitched at their knitting; a flush came over her cheeks, and she cast a childishly appealing glance at her neighbor across the chalk line. Her eyes were fast filling with tears. "Save me!" her look seemed to entreat. "Let me not lose this happy fortune." Mrs. Blair interpreted the message, and rose to the occasion with the vigor of the intellectually great.

"Mis' Mitchell," she said clearly, "I may be queer in my notions, but it makes me as nervous as a witch to have anybody hollerin' out o' my winders. I don't care whether it's company nor whether it's my own folks. If you want to speak to Miss Dyer, you come along here arter me, — don't you hit the partition now! — right out o' my door an' into her'n. Here, I'll knock! Miss Dyer, be you to home?"

The little old lady came forward, fluttering and radiant in the excess of her relief.

"Yes, I guess I be," she said, "an' all alone, too! I see you go by the winder, an' I was in hopes you'd come in!"

Then the situation dawned upon Mrs. Mitchell with an effect vastly surprising to the two old pensioners. She turned from one to the other, including them both in a look of warm loving-kindness. It was truly an illumination. Hitherto,



they had thought chiefly of her winter cloak and nodding ostrich plume; now, at last, they saw her face, and read some part of its message.

"You poor souls!" she cried. "Do you care as much as that? Oh, you poor souls!"

Miss Dyer fingered her apron and looked at the floor, but her companion turned abruptly away, even though she trod upon the partition in going.

"Law! it's nothin' to make such a handle of," she said. "Folks don't want to be under each other's noses all the time. I dunno's anybody could stan' it, unless 't was an emmet. They seem to git along swarmin' round together."

Mrs. Mitchell left the room abruptly.

"Wednesday or Thursday, then!" she called over her shoulder.

The next forenoon, Mrs. Blair made her neighbor a long visit. Both old ladies had their knitting, and they sat peacefully swaying back and forth, recalling times past, and occasionally alluding to their happy Wednesday.

"What I really come in for," said Mrs. Blair finally, "was to ask if you don't think both our settin'-rooms need new paper."

The other gave one bewildered glance about her.

"Why, 't ain't been on more 'n two weeks," she began; and then remembrance awoke in her, and she stopped. It was not the scene of their refuge and conflict that must be considered; it was the house of fancy built by each unto herself. Invention did not come easily to her as yet, and she spoke with some hesitation.

"I've had it in mind myself quite a spell, but somehow I ain't been able to fix on the right sort o' paper."

"What do you say to a kind of a straw color, all lit up with tulips?" inquired Mrs. Blair triumphantly.

"Ain't that kinder gay?"

"Gay? Well, you want it gay, don't ye? I don't know why folks seem to think they've got to live in a hearse because they expect to ride in one! What if we be gettin' on a little mite in years? We ain't underground yet, be we? I see a real good ninepenny paper once, all covered over with green brakes. I declare if 't wa'n't sweet pretty! Well, whether I paper or whether I don't, I've got some thoughts of a magenta sofy. I'm tired to death of that old horsehair lounge that sets in my clock-room. Sometimes I wish the moths would tackle it, but I guess they've got more sense. I've allers said to myself I'd have a magenta sofy when I could get round to it, and I dunno's I shall be any nearer to it than I be now."

"Well, you *are* tasty," said Miss Dyer, in some awe. "I dunno how you come to think o' that!"

"Priest Rowe had one when I wa'n't more 'n twenty. Some of his relations give it to him (he married into the quality), an' I remember as if 't was yesterday what a tew there was over it. An' I said to myself then, if ever I was prospered I'd have a magenta sofy. I ain't got to it till now, but now I'll have it if I die for 't."

"Well, I think you're in the right on 't." Miss Dyer spoke absently, glancing from the window in growing trouble. "Oh, Mis' Blair," she continued, with a sudden burst of confidence, "you don't think there's a storm brewin', do you? If it snows Wednesday, I shall give up beat!"

Mrs. Blair, in her turn, peered at the smiling sky.

"I hope you ain't one o' them kind that thinks every fair day is a weather breeder," she said. "Law, no! I don't believe it will storm; an' if it does, why, there's other Wednesdays comin'!"

*Alice Brown.*

